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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

TUESDAY, May 23, 1933. U.S. Department of Agriculture

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Community Canning Centers." Information from the Extension Service and the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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In the war on hard times some of the most successful soldiers have been housewives who have raised food for their families and then preserved a supply of garden products and meats for winter use. Home gardening, home poultry raising, home canning, curing, preserving, drying, and storing all these food conservation methods have helped carry families through the winter comfortably, even though money and jobs were scarce. And these supplies of home-produced and home conserved food helped make many families independent who would otherwise have had to appeal to charity. A large number of these farm families reported better health for the year and fewer doctor bills, all because they had planned early for a balanced and an ample diet and had supplied their cellars and pantries with the necessary foods to carry out their plans.

Thanks to the scientists who have investigated the process of food preservation and to the extension workers who have spread the news, none of the housewives who have been doing their own canning have had to risk spoilage. Spoilage of canned foods is costly--a menace to health and a waste of good material. Fortunately, anyone canning at home can now have - for the asking - information on reliable methods of home canning and on the right equipment for the job. But equipment has often offered a problem. Equipment costs money and money has been scarce. Successful canning of meats and all vegetables, except tomatoes, requires a steam pressure cooker. But many families haven't had the money to buy a steam pressure outfit, nor even all the jars or cans they need. What to do about it? The community canning center solved the problem for many neighborhoods.

In Pauls Valley, Oklahoma, the chamber of commerce provided a room, heat, retort, canner, sealer, and quart cans. People from farms brought their beans, corn, and other garden supplies to this cannery where they put them up with the help of a trained supervisor. They paid for the use of this equipment by canning on shares, leaving half of what they canned for the chamber of commerce. In this way many families without money or means of canning put up their own food for the winter and the city got 20,000 cans to aid the unemployed.

Of course, the unemployed themselves have taken part in many of these canning enterprises. Men who have free time have helped their wives in putting up food for the family's winter use. In Oregon, neighborhood canning centers ran very successfully last year in several commercial canneries which were unused at the time. Men and women brought their garden vegetables to these canneries and used equipment already there which had been lying idle. Another successful Oregon venture was the Josephine County cannery on wheels. You perhaps have already

heard about it. The county agent and the grange master built this traveling canning kitchen from an old truck and some discarded cannery equipment. The home demonstration agent scheduled it to remote districts where it did a big business. The agent traveled with it and had charge of the canning work with the assistance of trained local leaders. Two men who had worked in canning factories helped operate. The county court supplied cans on shares to those who couldn't afford them. By the end of the season the court had some 3000 cans for relief work. This was a new means of saving the food crop for winter for many families on outlying farms and they received it so heartily that the cannery was often in use both day and night. This one movable canning kitchen turned out 90,000 cans in six weeks.

In Alabama many schoolhouses became canning centers last summer. Neighbors joined together to purchase a pressure cooker and other supplies and then gathered at the schoolhouse to use them under the supervision of leaders trained by home demonstration agents. Some of the equipment cost nothing but labor. One group made a stove from a big gasoline drum. They hammered it flat on one side to hold the pressure canners, then cut a hole in one end for the stove pipe and arranged another opening with hinges for the stove door. In other localities men built outdoor furnaces of stone, brick, or native clay. On canning days the neighbors organized into groups, each with special work to do. Jobs interchanged during the day so no one would become tired. The men helped right along with their wives, preparing the vegetables, filling and sealing cans, and running the pressure cookers.

A power plant in Mississippi organized one very interesting community food preservation center last year. Steam pipes from the plant provided heat. The men made two large retorts from iron pipes and then carried steam pipes into a screened shed, set steam gauges into the pipes, piped running water to tubs, set up work tables and a hand sealer. This simple outfit turned out 3235 cans of fruits and vegetables and 32 gallons of pickles for that neighborhood last summer. Of course, a supervisor was on hand to help-- a young man trained by the home demonstration agent.

So far I've only told you about successful canning centers. But a venture like this succeeds only if it has been carefully planned and has a good leader and plenty of cooperation. Any canning center, even among neighbors, must run on a business basis and use safe and scientific methods. Also any food preservation center needs a supervisor to see that the equipment is used correctly and cared for, to advise on methods and to see that everything is sanitary. Of course, the ideal plan for any family with a garden is to own its own canning equipment and do its canning at home when garden products reach just the right stage. The next simplest plan is for several neighbors who own canners to cooperate at the height of the season, or to help a few nearby families who have no equipment. But when a community kitchen or work center seems the best solution, your state college or county extension agent can provide you with information on the subject. The Bureau of Home Economics at Washington, D.C. also stands ready with reliable information on the different kinds of food preservation, not only canning but drying, storing, preserving, pickling and so on.

Tomorrow: "Cream Soups for Low-cost Menus."

